

5. NEXT STEPS

The planning process in Panama has just begun. In many ways, formal adoption of the Comprehensive Plan is the first step, not the last. Without continuing action to implement and update the plan, village efforts up to this point will have little lasting impact.

There are several critical requirements to effective implementation of the plan. First, Panama should now prepare certain regulatory measures, such as zoning and subdivision ordinances, which would enforce the plan's policies and recommendations. Second, the village should consider project scheduling devices, like the capital improvements program, which would allow implementation of the most important public improvements within budgetary constraints. Fourth, village officials must insure that local residents continue to be actively involved in planning discussions and decisions. Finally, the plan itself must be dynamic and must continually reflect local aspirations and opportunities. Each of these requirements are briefly discussed below.

ZONING ORDINANCE

One of the most important next steps is the preparation of a zoning ordinance to complement the contents and guidelines of the Comprehensive Plan.

Zoning is one of the most common regulatory measures used by governmental units to implement planning policies. It consists of a zoning district map and supporting ordinance text. The map divides a community into a series of zoning districts, and the text describes regulations for the use of land within these districts, including permitted uses, lot sizes, setback, density standards, etc.

SUBDIVISION ORDINANCE

Equally important in implementing the plan should be a subdivision ordinance. This ordinance would regulate the development of raw land within the community. Subdivision regulations can ensure proper physical

development and adequate public facilities within growth areas. They normally prescribe standards for street improvements, lot sizes and layouts, water and sewer facilities, etc. Subdivision regulations also can ensure that the appropriate costs of public improvements within growth areas will be borne by the developer and new residents rather than by the present community.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAM

Another potential tool for implementing the plan is the six-year capital improvements program, which establishes a schedule for all public improvement projects within a six-year time period.

The Planning Commission first prepares a list of all desired public improvements, including transportation and community facility projects. Then all projects are reviewed on the basis of the comprehensive plan, priorities are assigned, cost estimates prepared, and potential funding sources identified.

Panama's financial resources will always be limited, and public dollars must be spent wisely. The capital improvements program would allow the village to provide the most critical public improvements, yet stay within budget constraints. It could avoid costly mistakes and promote maximum community benefits from all public investment.

CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT

The planning process has begun to establish a healthy dialogue among local residents concerning the future of the community. Wide publicity has been given to the plan, and a number of citizens have thus far been involved in planning discussions. This active citizen involvement should become standard policy. The planning process will affect everyone in the community, and everyone should contribute to planning decisions.

REVIEW AND REVISION

The Comprehensive Plan is not a static document. The planning process must be continuous and the plan dynamic. As community attitudes change and new issues arise, the plan must be reviewed and updated.

From time to time, certain changes to the plan document will be required. The Planning Commission and Village Board should carefully review proposed changes and actively seek citizen comment on such proposals. If changes are found appropriate, they should be formally added to the plan by legal amendment. Also, at five or 10-year intervals, the entire plan document should be reviewed and modified to ensure that it continues to be an up-to-date expression of community goals and intentions.